



The Poverty Idea  
As a World Malady



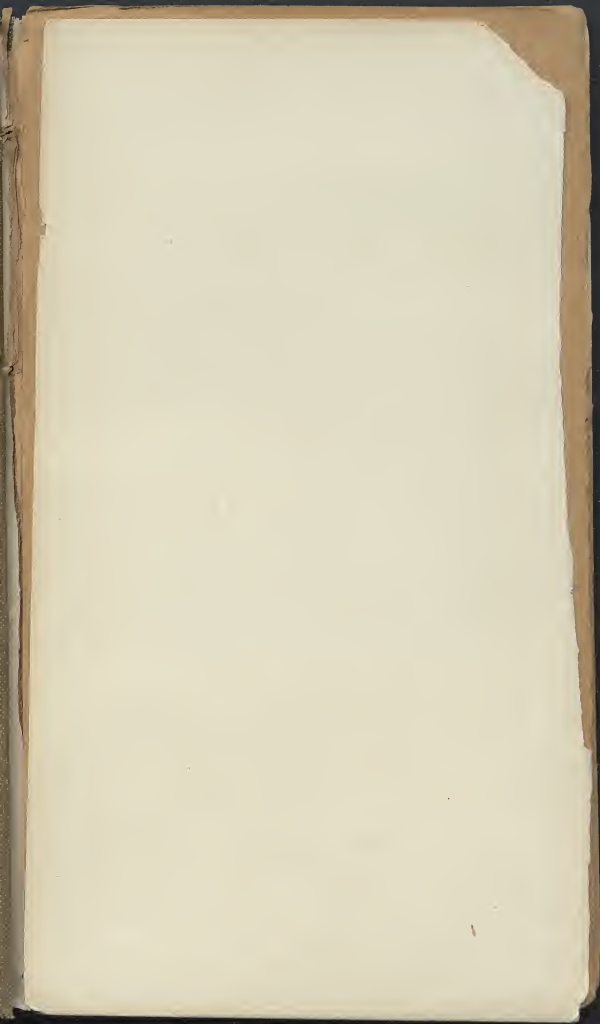
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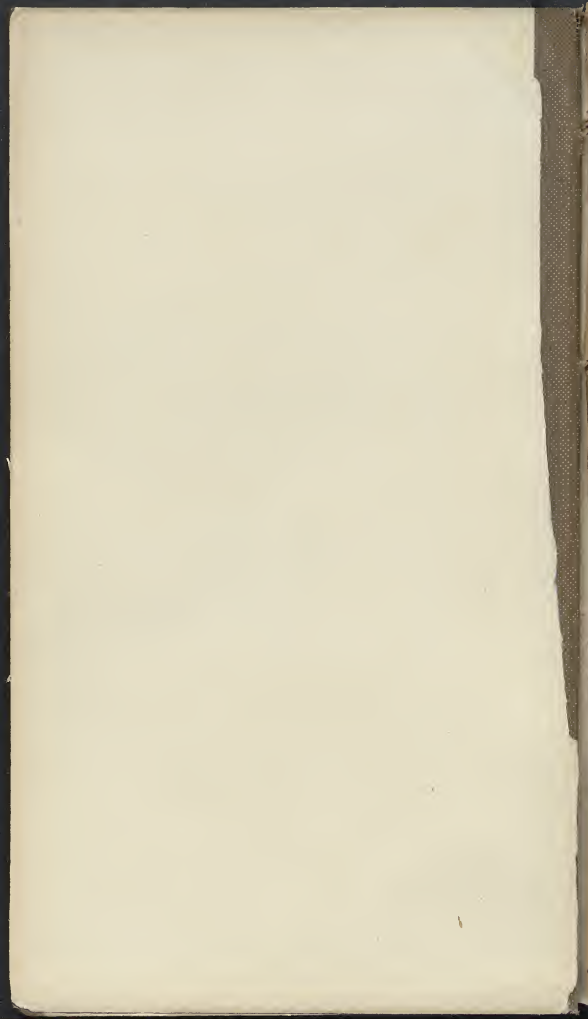
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# The Poverty Idea As a World Malady

By ROSA G. S. ABBOTT.

The age-long cry for wealth reveals a universal need, a universal lack. This lack is felt by all classes of society, even where there is apparent affluence: for the possession of riches breeds appetite for increase of riches. Yet, happily, we find those who are wealthy and content with no wealth whatever: and this paradox proves that poverty is merely a mental state, and that it may be transmuted or outgrown. If the great Alexander could cast from him all his material possessions upon his departure for Oriental conquest: if he could feel the power within to create, and to attract more, according to his need, we can do likewise by mental expansion. Who so care-free as Diogenes in his tub? Who so jubilant, so royally rich as Saint Francis of Assissi after he had cast away worldly goods? He is, *par excellence*, our most wealthy and satisfied and felicitous precedent, our most glorious and triumphant example of mental abundance and of spiritual freedom—which is the true wealth and which does not perish.

But how about today, with frantic competition born of the absurdly complex tastes which have created a vast net-work of unnecessary necessities? Can we acquire the largeness of apprehension of our John Burroughs or John Muir, who live with Nature's soul, condemning pseudo luxury? We can, but it will require time and culture and the idea of impermanency in all things mundane, as well as the idea of pre-existence of the soul, and the eternal surge and transformation which we now know as evolution; the key to which comes only with an access of consciousness and of universal intuition.

The tendency of ignorance is to begin by blaming the rich: "If the trusts had not grasped more than their share, there would have been sufficient for all"—(etc., etc., *ad libitum*, *ad nauseam*).

But this is a fallacious theory. Reflect upon the everlasting contrasts, from the days of Pharaoh and the abused hosts of Israel, to all the countless millions of Orient and of Europe, who, though far superior in number, had never the skill nor the power to prevent their own exploitation by the few who understood life "*dans une grande manière*."

Immensurable charity and bounty, given through thousands of years in all climes, yet no relief came to the mass of the poverty stricken. Benevolence and philanthropy of each and every age effected no change in the privation of the submerged majority. Jesus did little, and that which He did was through alteration of the mental status: through elevation of doubt into faith; through conversion of tangential tendencies into unity with the centre of truth and light. But the great mass of misery about him remained unassuaged, save as the individual received a new heart and a new aspect of life. This fact reveals inherent conditions, *all mental*: and no case can be made by those who think to extort pity for the poor by villifying the rich. Envy and jealousy are self-avowed inferiority, which merit no more than they have received. To whine, to count up one's wrongs, betrays the mongrel soul and the cowardly mind: therefore we must not think to make capital for poverty by cursing the rich. Rather should we ask, "What is this eternal necessity of society, by which a few (thinkers of abundance) have all the gains and the gaities, whilst the vast majority groan and sweat under the lash of poverty? Is it cosmic order and purpose, is it evolutionary precedence, which is predestined, or is there escape for all who can learn the hidden law, the correct attitude toward universe?"

The Western World has not yet learned that Caste is a great spiritual law, and that it is omni-persistent. Animals and plants are of varying degrees of prosperity; and their struggles for food, light and air are unequally waged, unevenly recompensed; and this reveals *subjective* cause. In human kind we see four great, natural divisions which remain always in place; like rivers: though their banks are more flexible and their waters shift, according to laws of equilibrium and environmental stress.

True Caste (unlike the Western notion of Class) is psychic, not material or social. It is from within, not from without. It is the inevitable differentiation of energies and activities which we observe in colleges or in families. Caste bases on cosmic progression and surge. Its lines of cleavage are inherent. The great Buddha was born a social aristocrat, but by his sublime renunciation he proved himself a true Brahmana of the highest caste, an avatar, a superman. "By deeds one becomes an outcast, by deeds one becomes a Brahmana," he taught.

Caste cannot, therefore, disappear, although certain utopists may fancy that democracy may cause water to run in consonantly up grades.



The highest caste consists of the intellectuals: those in whom emphasis is laid upon the thinking principle. These have a higher and finer nervous structure, with greater delicacy of physique and complexity of brain; and with abilities above the average type. These are not essentially rich in worldly goods, but they have an inherent wealth of invention and power of self protection and self restraint, which the proletariat, asking aid, do not possess. With this caste, lack of money arises, if at all, from lack of prudence and attention to material ways and means; the emphasis being placed upon things intangible and immaterial.

It is quite possible that, like the great Greek, one may fall into a well while gazing up at the stars: unless one is able to think and to act in opposite directions at the same time. The "high caste" mind may always create leisure and comfort through culture, books, self-control and the reverent attitude toward the marvelous order and wisdom of Nature. In this caste the waste and ostentation of the "brute rich" are conspicuous by their absence: though if Beauty be sought as an aid to perfectivity, one will incidentally attract it, together with refined comfort, quiet elegance, peace and plenty. It is unquestionably true that *aesthetics*, more than aught beside, lead to beautiful and graceful abundance. In fact, the "artistic temperament" is, in and of itself, the highest type of wealth, procuring joys the phlegmatic may not compass.

The second caste, consisting of the powerful of the earth; kings, governors, landed gentry and warriors have far more wealth than the highest caste: as they are objective and concentrate upon worldly goods, rather than upon wisdom and the light of imagination and mental vision. They do not deny Beauty, but affirm it, and thus beauty abides with them: and this is the great lesson for those who crave beautiful accessories. Live in the idea of graceful provision, and seek it, and it shall seek you.

Calvin attracted poor and plebeian environment because he contemned luxury and taste and the poesies of existence. The de Medici loved and sought Beauty and Magnificence and lived in their cult, and by it they elevated the world and gave impetus to art: though they fell short of sainthood and established no rigid reforms after the manner of Calvin.

Spencer was poor, as he excluded decorative beauty from his life in order to moil among dusty archives for his data of synthetic philosophy, by which we are enriched, even though he lived in barren deprivation.

Spinoza, in retreat and oblivion, forgot the beauty and comfort of society, that he might weave his mighty web of cosmic geometry and ideal "necessity."

Fabre, in penury, bequeathed us his marvelous "*Souvenirs Entomologiques*"; which he could not have done had a pressing world and the pleasures of wealth distracted him from lonely vigils and studies into the inner life of tiny creatures.

Balzac, the French Shakespeare, seemed under a spell of poverty: but it was a divine fatality which enabled him to do his universal "*Comedie Humaine*."

But what shall we say of a Fabricius, sought by rulers for counsel of wisdom, yet dying at public expense? What of Coleridge, the thinker; and Mozart, type of harmonic beauty? Doth it not appear that the fatality of some antecedent existence laid its rude necessity upon each? Verily there are examples inexplicable—both of wealth and of poverty—which have their roots in pre-existent experience, and which are but the outworking of the law of sequence: of psychic cause and effect. Yet, negative states may be overcome by the new psychology, which will discover hidden complexes arising from forgotten subconscious activities and dissolve them in a mighty affirmation of equilibrium and of abundance; with increase of spiritual vision.

The next caste is the commercial, or those engaged wholly in traffic. It is material, appetitive and concentrative and lacks little in the realm of plebeian plenty. Its real need is that of intellectual and artistic expansion.

The lowest caste comprises the proletariat, the serf, the slave, those who have not yet achieved an independent thinking principle, but are subject, like the ox and the ass, to him who thinks. This caste may be slowly elevated by "suggestion"; and this is being done in America by the aid of music, pictures, lectures and by the help of facile journals, breakfast foods, imported fruits, rapid transit and civic order and beauty. The great Buddha had a message for this caste, and ordered teaching and even saintship as practicable for its apprehension. Also he avoided excitement of its blind hatred and envy of the rich, as Christians have ever deliberately done.

Let it be insisted that these four castes are inherent in the social structure and that they appear to be an evolutionary necessity: though not always in the same definitive degree; and one may leap to higher caste by culture, as a bright scholar will pass into higher school grades. Yet always from below, the

ranks fill, and in about the same status, so that Jesus realized the inherent tendency when he said: "The poor ye have always with you."

Now, having posed these conditions, existent as they have been during more than five thousand years, how shall we declare preventive measures? What affirmation and curative discipline will apply to all this motley crew of world-pilgrims?

We reply: there are several efficacious methods of elevating *caste*, and, incidentally, conditions.

First. The *religious* attitude should be taught and reiterated. "The Father and I are One" affirms power and plenty: not weakness and dependence. By hourly thought of union with universal abundance we may attract, according to our need and our powers of receptivity: exactly as we breathe air from heaven: and that without poaching upon the preserves of any other being.

Marcus Aurelius, emperor and mystic, says: "Let your soul receive the deity as your blood receives the air, for the influences of the one are no less vital than the other. For there is an ambient, omnipresent spirit, which lies as open and pervious to your mind as the air you breathe into your lungs. But, then, you must remember to be disposed to draw it."

We are to become conscious of our divinity, and of our right to a living wage: and we do this by intelligent application of the powers of Will and of Love. Will, and effort to receive influx of light. Love, which accords to all other beings the same right as our own. In this attitude we must not kill. This is spiritual law; as killing sets up vibrations of pain and of hate, which flow to the confines of Universe, and react to plague us and to separate us from the centripetal love-currents.

Disease, despair, hatred, prostitution and all ills have their roots in our brutality toward animals: the great speechless caste, which has its evolutionary span to complete, and which should be helped and not exploited. This is imperative if one would win peace and plenty, with inner sight and enduring fortune.

Justice and kindness toward every living creature are a *sine qua non* of such wealth of soul as that of a Saint Francis. Also, from purely selfish motives, one should comprehend that refined and æsthetic foods lead to a rise in caste and "temperament," and thus liberate the thinking principle.

Second. *Gratitude* for hourly good gifts. The attitude of thankfulness and of happiness, magnetically attracts all the best things of life; such as health, grace, love, beauty, willing service and plentiful supplies. The divine mother, Nature, owes us our meed of reciprocity and of co-operation, and she will generously accord it as soon as our obedience and comprehension are assured. Gratitude necessarily includes helpfulness to all persons, and a desire to promote universal harmony, happiness and prosperity.

Third. *Appreciation* of all things, with understanding of their merit. Observe architecture intelligently, and try to know why cultivated persons are so profoundly affected by it. Learn to judge sculpture critically, and its sister, art, painting. Study the rugs; those Oriental woven poems: observe wood-carving, color-harmonies and all the refined arts and industries of the older peoples. These cultural efforts are means of self-levitation. Use them thoughtfully and with respect. Lacking appreciation one might draw a chair over a polished floor, thus proving that he would not know how to use a fine floor if he owned one.

Do not tread down an æsthetic rug with insolence, but use it caressingly and even reverently; knowing that each thread tells of race-idealism and aspiration; and in its Orient home, shoes are removed and soft sandals substituted before stepping upon it. Associate beautiful workmanship with the mentality and degree of psychic advance of those who achieved it; and endeavor to rise to full comprehension of its message and mission to us who lack their secret.

Unite in one harmonious scheme, the poem, the statue, the flower, the idea of eternal life and of universal activity, all obedient to definitive laws of growth.

"The older I grow, the more surely I rely upon that law whereby the rose and the lily blossom," wrote Goethe in 1831. "*Consider the lilies,*" and know that evolutionary development implies less resistance and more power to live, and to enjoy, and to understand life's meanings, in the large aspect of unity and of identity under one law. (The lilies unite with *Life as a Whole*. They are not segregated botanical specimens, but a very part of Cosmic Being in beautiful endeavor: and Jesus lifts us into the realm of pure æsthetics and the higher mysticism by giving them to us as an ensample of repose through union with over-soul.)

Eschew appetitive indulgence, as it closes the entrance to the plane of spirit-vision, and to that of the occult science and arts.

The aristocratic idea of "*noblesse oblige*" must be held, with the pride which forbids dependence on others, or the slightest desire to exploit them. *Responsibility*, respect for self and independence will guard against parasitism and a too ready acceptance of favors: and this attitude, of itself, is a self-providence and a thrift which breeds means and ways and which absorbs from the *Whole* (not from the parts) the essentials of simple and dignified living.

These are *idealistic* measures and remedies to be apprehended by the thoughtful and the reflective mind.

Fourth. Material methods of economic success are indicated notably by Benjamin Franklin in his essays on industry and thrift. Energy, efficiency, parsimony, denial of luxuries, plodding toward a goal of acquirement, these are efficacious in their realm: and until one develops intuition and the divine escapement from the common way, one is wise to adhere strictly to toil and saving—the ox-cart methods of earth.

"What is divine, runs with light feet": and there comes a time when thought creates; without task, or taskmaster: thus ushering in the higher consciousness of life as an ecstasy; when one wonders why there ever was lack or limitation, as it now seems an absurd self-deprivation.

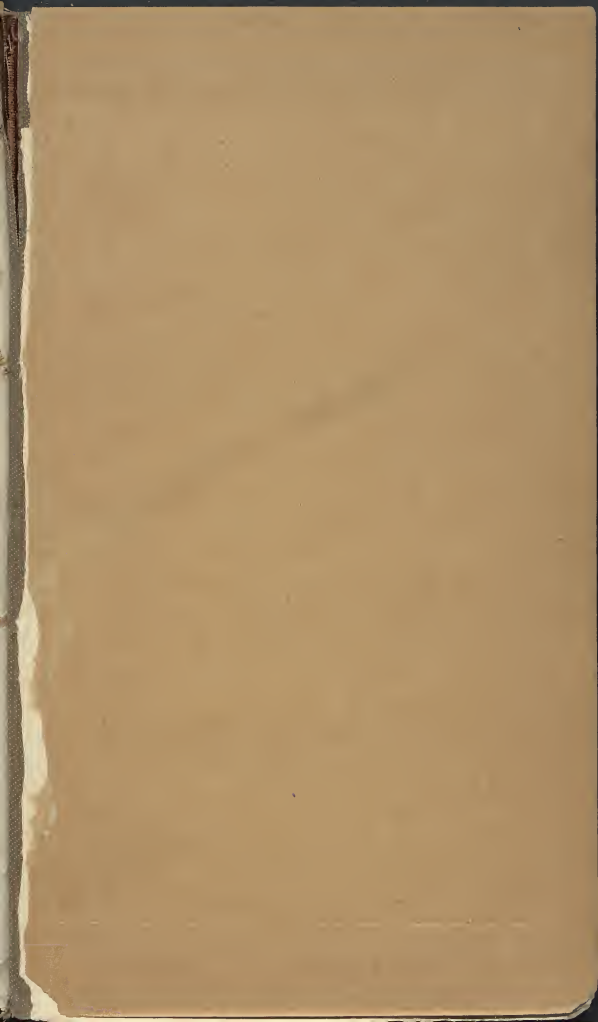
By intelligence, love and worship comes deliverance: and the sodden world may again realize an Eden, through simple beauty and projected ideality, by union with cosmic order and abundance.

In the interim, the beneficent "Rich" and the "Trusts" are creating wealth by social uplift of schools, high wages, profit sharing, welfare work, reputable amusements and pleasurable constructiveness.

*The literary, the spiritual, the aesthetic are the great caste levitators*: and if mind be focussed on these while hands are busy, one will soon rise to their level, leaving dull routine of leaden labor behind.

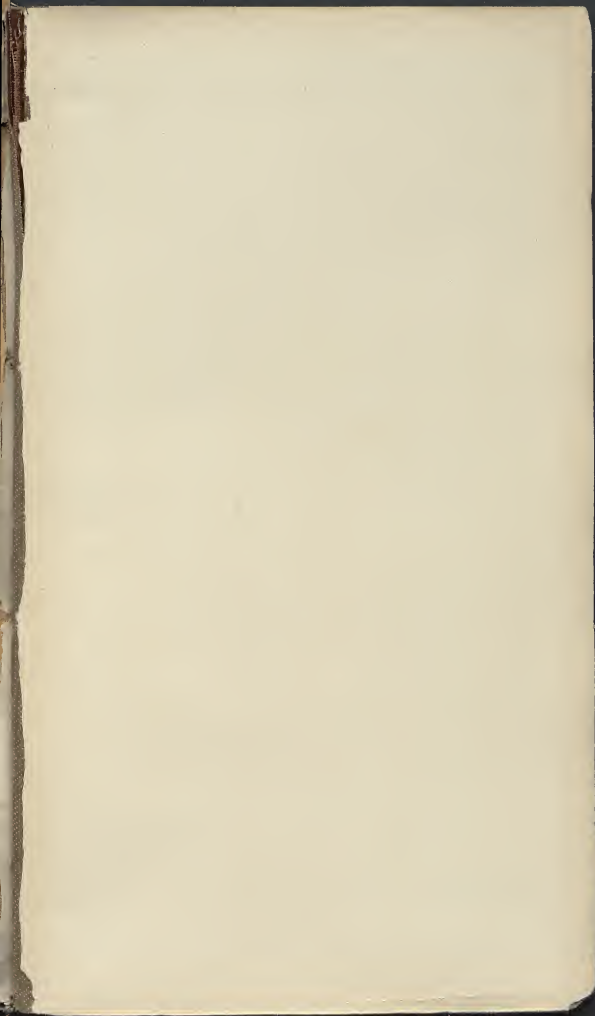
The simple tastes of the golden age should be revived as an aid toward inner poise and tranquility, and, also, as a valuable adjunct of æstheticism. The graceful Greeks saw primitive living as happy living. Abnormal needs, which pass beyond refined simplicity, are morbid and diseased tendencies in society, becoming inflammatory and a cause of general demoralization. The plain living and high thinking of Rabindranath Tagore constitute a robust yet elegant simplicity, which admits of poésie, communion with Universe and a mental fecundity which benefits all mankind.

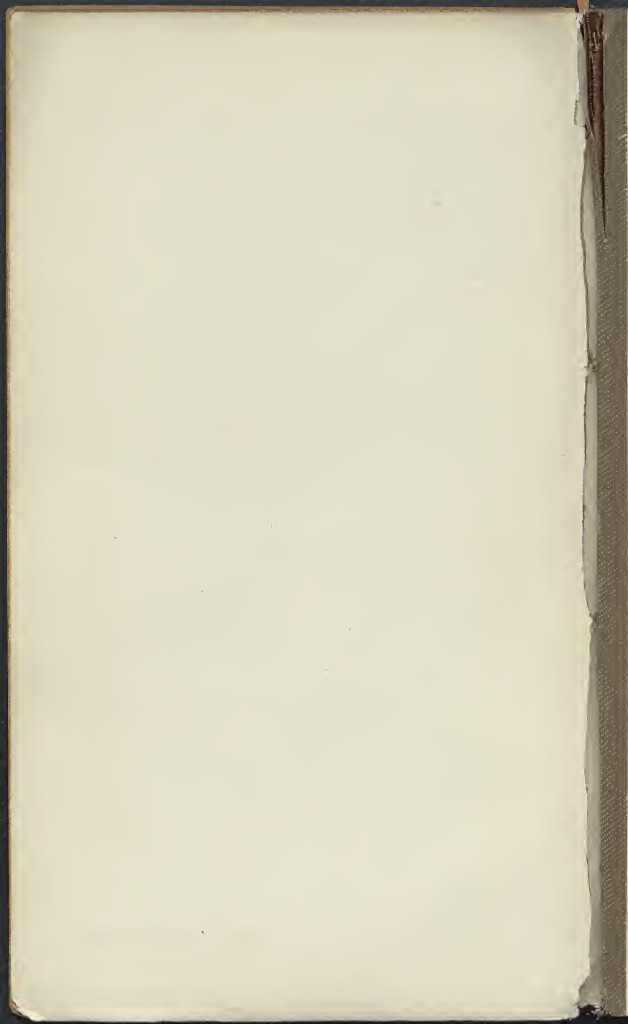
"A poet should not run to fires," nor should he umpire street brawls, whether canine or human: neither should those capable of "large discourse, looking before and after," preoccupy their minds with trivial modes of the moment. "We are Gods." We are growing toward Godhood, and its consciousness of the *Whole*. All is ours, because we are parts of the *All*. Each cell is entitled to unity in the life of the great body. Poverty is undevelopment. Abundance comes with a liberal culture of body, mind and spirit: a correct *rapproch* with seen and unseen planes of living: and this is a *science* which must be learned as any other science is learned: it is a science of the finer forces: a psychic "wireless," which sends out its "S. O. S." appeal into the great intelligible Universe; and which gets a response in consonance with its perfect adjustment. We are free, as soon as we perceive our relation to the ambient subconscious Energy: the *Life* ocean; a relation that is at once identic and also a repose in our over-soul, our higher Self.











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# The Poverty Idea As a World Malady.

—BY—

ROSA G. S. ABBOTT

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and finer forces, that  
to transmute into higher  
self - Help through  
self - Knowledge.

after  
relation  
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one bears  
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and persons  
may be  
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astr is the character  
Application of the evolutionary  
idea, with its psychic parallel  
Reincarnation.

The plow horse bears  
in its body its exact degree  
of capability, and its relation  
to the superior thoroughbred.  
In all animals and persons  
this soul-writing may be  
read. In Physics we  
have the law of Conserva-  
tion of Energy: by which  
each lower force is able  
to transmute into higher  
and finer forces, this

law manifesting psychically  
in Caste, affords us our  
way of escape from rude  
fatality, through inherent  
power of raising the  
centre of gravity from lower  
to higher energies; and thus  
forward betterment of en-  
vironment and of activities.

See "Caste" as  
evolutional necessity of  
Precedence: (as in the  
Grades of a school, or  
a University.)

See the vast  
objection "Variety" wending

its way back to subjective  
and Synthetic Unity;  
and all Centrifugal  
forces transmuting into  
Centripetal rhythms,  
Obedient to Will, to aspi-  
-ration and to Polariza-  
-tion with the divine  
Centre and the "Great  
far off, divine event  
forward which all  
creation moves."

Rosa G. S. Abbott.

